



California Department of Education  
Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction



## ***Middle Grades Spotlight***

***A Newsletter for California's Middle Grades Educator***

Summer 2005

### Theme Teacher Collaboration

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## A Message from the Superintendent

To truly leave no child behind, we must work together on behalf of each student. The idea is simple; however, the practice of working together is complex. It is particularly complex in the secondary school environment. There, school communities tend to be larger and more diverse than those in elementary schools; and curriculum and teachers are departmentalized by subject area, making it more difficult to meet the needs of the whole student.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 underscores the necessity of highly qualified teachers working collaboratively to increase student achievement. In my [High Performing High Schools Initiative](#), I emphasize the importance of fostering the development of world-class teachers and site administrators and creating and supporting successful transitions to secondary education. Middle schools are a vital link in educating our students. It is important that content area teachers from middle schools and high schools collaborate regularly to build seamless curricula and smooth transitions for our students.

I believe that nothing will raise the achievement of children higher, faster, and more evenly than the rising tide of qualified teachers purposefully working together toward a focused goal. This issue of the *Middle Grades Spotlight* focuses on teacher collaboration, common planning time, and the benefits of working in partnership.

Beyond the research and discussion about what makes for good collaboration, this newsletter highlights three middle schools that describe their collaborative practices. I am, as always, deeply appreciative of California's professional educators who share with us workable solutions from which we can all learn.

A special thanks this time goes to the principals and staff at Bernice Ayer Middle School, Olive Peirce Middle School, and Woodrow Wilson Middle School for their contributions – not only to the *Middle Grades Spotlight* but to our students.

**JACK O'CONNELL**

## Teacher Collaboration

As schools begin to address the challenges of meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, they will need to maximize the professional development opportunities they provide for their teachers. Guskey (2003) points out that the ultimate goal of professional development for teachers is to improve student learning. The fact that the quality of classroom instruction has a strong impact on student learning is rarely disputed (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Careful planning will be required to ensure that teachers receive the proper training that provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality classroom instruction. Many schools have found that by providing teachers with a structured collaboration time, they can increase the instructional capacity of their teachers. This increase in instructional capacity leads to an increase in student learning.

**“Schools need to provide adequate professional development with collaborative planning time embedded within the school day to assist in the development of the whole child.”**

~ From the Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development’s 2004 Adopted Positions

The use of the term *teacher collaboration* can be confusing. “Collaboration is the process of developing interdependent relationships where all are focused on a common purpose and set of goals and where people must rely on each other to achieve these goals. It is the synergy created when a group’s effectiveness exceeds what individuals can accomplish on their own” (Conzemius & O’Neill, 2001). When teachers work together to share, improve, and develop teaching strategies that promote increased student learning, they are collaborating.

For professional development to be effective, it needs to be ongoing and embedded into the teacher’s workday (National Staff Development Council, n.d.). To accomplish this goal, some schools have provided their teachers with a common planning time to facilitate teacher collaboration. Common planning time is a scheduled, structured, collaborative time for teachers to work and learn together. It is scheduled during the teachers’ workday and it allows them time to develop and refine instructional strategies to improve classroom instruction.

The Alliance for Excellent Education’s 2004 report, *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers*, stresses the importance and benefits of providing common planning time for teacher collaboration. Although the report addresses issues pertaining to new teachers, the principles discussed apply to all teachers. The following is an excerpt from the report:

If it takes a village to raise children, it follows that a community of teachers can more effectively instruct them than isolated individuals. Teachers who plan together stay in teaching longer, and they become a community of professionals, all of whom are responsible for student learning. As Joellen Killian at the National Staff Development Council puts it, “When opportunities for collaboration are present in a school’s culture, teachers are typically more satisfied with their work, more actively involved in the schools, and work more productively toward school goals.”

Collaboration offsets the isolation many teachers feel early in their careers, and it fosters a collegial work environment so that teaching becomes a culture of cooperation and continuous learning. The best collaboration includes teachers and leaders across all experience levels so all teachers can learn from one another.

(Continued on page 3)

## Benefits of Teacher Collaboration

The benefits of teacher collaboration are well documented. Many researchers have established a positive correlation between teacher collaboration and an increase in student learning. In the National Middle School Association's 2003 research summary, *What Works to Improve Student Achievement*, Susan Trimble reports the following results:

- Common planning time enables teachers to work together on interdisciplinary teams, resulting in improved student achievement scores (Mertens & Flowers, 2003).
- Teacher teams using common planning time to collaborate were found to have an increased implementation level of effective classroom practices and teaming activities (Mertens & Flowers, 2003).
- Teachers who collaborated together showed a positive association with curriculum coordination, classroom integration, and interdisciplinary practices (Flowers, et al., 2000a).
- Instructional improvements in the classroom occur best in schools that have established organizational conditions to support teacher collaboration, such as common planning time, teams that engage in positive adult-child relationships, heterogeneous groupings of students, and flexible scheduling (Flowers, et al., 2000a, 2000b; Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998).
- Teachers who team together during a common planning time were able to learn and problem-solve together (Erb, 2001; Gallagher-Polite, 2001).
- Structures that support teacher collaboration are a part of successful schools (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

## Collaborative Strategies

Just scheduling time for teacher collaboration will not improve classroom instruction or student performance. How the time is used is crucial. Quality professional development is needed for teachers to gain the skills and strategies necessary to maximize collaborative opportunities to increase student achievement. *Tapping The Potential* lists the three following collaborative strategies that teachers and schools can use to improve classroom instruction:

- **Develop lesson plans and curriculum.** Redesigning curriculum and instruction is a time-consuming, complex task. Teachers benefit when they work on curriculum collaboratively. When several teachers plan together, they gain from the perspectives, experiences, knowledge, and skills of one another.
- **Use student assessment data.** The requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 require schools to collect a wealth of achievement data. But teachers need help interpreting the data and using the data to evaluate and improve their teaching. A 2003 study by Supovitz and Klein at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education found that innovative, successful schools used student achievement data in three ways:
  - First, teachers used data as a basis for identifying lesson objectives.
  - Second, teachers and administrators used student performance data to guide the grouping of students for focused instruction.
  - Third, teachers used data to align their lessons with established standards.

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**Use collaborative teaching models.** Several programs can help teachers link their teaching to student learning, such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) study groups and the Standards in Practice (SIP) model, developed by the Education Trust in 1995.

Regardless of the collaborative strategy used, when groups of teachers effectively focus on improving classroom instruction, an increase in student achievement is the result.

## Challenges

Creating a formal structured time for teacher collaboration can be a challenge. Adding additional time to the school day and/or the school year can be costly. Both time and money are scarce resources at school district offices and school sites. However, the *Aiming High Toolkit* (2002) outlines two ways that regular planning time can be structured into a school schedule without additional resources. First, allocate professional development days across the year. That is, instead of meeting for three days (24 hours, 1440 minutes), the minutes can be disbursed throughout the school year to allow teachers to meet for 80 minutes every other week. Secondly, districts can bank minutes during the week. There are many variations to this approach, all involving adding a set number of minutes to existing course length and banking those minutes for use as planning time.

### Teacher Collaboration/Common Planning Time Activities

The following are examples of ways that teacher collaboration time can be utilized:

- ✦ Aligning curriculum to standards
- ✦ Analyzing and evaluating student test data
- ✦ Analyzing student work
- ✦ Collaborating with school-site counselors and resource teachers
- ✦ Developing common assessments and rubrics
- ✦ Developing curriculum
- ✦ Developing lessons aligned to state standards
- ✦ Developing thematic units
- ✦ Implementing lesson laboratory sessions
- ✦ Mapping the curriculum to the instructional calendar
- ✦ Monitoring growth of individual students on assignments and assessments
- ✦ Sharing of “best practices”
- ✦ Working with instructional coaches
- ✦ Working in instructional learning teams

Despite the challenges some districts have found ways to implement teacher collaboration time by adopting a schedule that includes a common planning time. Others have found that block scheduling allows more options for collaboration time. Some districts schedule early release or late arrival days for students; others extend the school day slightly or bank time to accumulate hours for collaboration time.

Finding teacher collaboration time during the school day often requires creative scheduling. Bernice Ayer Middle School in Orange County, and Olive Peirce and Woodrow Wilson schools in San Diego County have overcome those challenges. They structured common planning time into their schedule to provide teacher collaboration time. The principals of these three middle

schools attribute their schools’ increase in student achievement scores over the past several years to their effective use of teacher collaboration time.

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## Conclusion

Research verifies that teachers who are well prepared and trained are more effective in the classroom. The California Department of Education recognizes the importance of teacher collaboration as a powerful research-based means of improving student achievement. Teacher collaboration is one of the nine Essential Program Components (EPC) required of struggling schools that consistently do not meet their Academic Performance Index (API) growth targets and AYP. The middle school Academic Program Survey that contains the EPCs is located at

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/documents/mgaps1204.doc>.

The best way to increase teacher effectiveness in the classroom is through regular quality professional development. Quality professional development results in improved student learning. Providing teachers with scheduled collaboration time is one way of providing teachers with site-based, long-term, effective professional development directly related to the teachers' classroom instruction.

By Mary Donnelly-Ortega, Consultant, Middle and High School Improvement Office, California Department of Education

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### *Taking Center Stage*

- **Recommendation 7:**  
Examine the use of time to provide students and teachers opportunities to plan, integrate, teach, and learn.
- **Recommendation 13:**  
Provide relevant and appropriate school-based, comprehensive, ongoing professional development.
- It is essential to schedule time for collaborative planning, benchmark assessment development, and scoring and evaluation of student work. (p. 150)

# Ensuring High Levels of Achievement for All Students

**Bernice Ayer Middle School**  
**Orange County**  
**Capistrano Unified School District**  
**1271 Sarmentoso**  
**San Clemente, California**  
**Dr. Cheryl Baughn, Principal**  
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Community: **Urban**

Enrollment: **793**

Student Demographics:

**2%** Asian

**1%** Filipino

**24%** Hispanic/Latino

**71%** White

**2%** Other

Grade Levels: + ! ,

2004 **API:** + - ' ' fl i d ' & - ' d c ] b h g ' g ]

2004 **AYP:** Yes\*

Free/Reduced Lunch: **19%**

English Learners: **16%**

\* School met all 2004 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria.

CEÁ } ^ æ | Ë c æ | \* ^ c Á CE& æ å ^ { ã & ) Á score reflects staff's commitment to high achievement for **all** students at Bernice Ayer Middle School (BAMS). In 2004 the school's API score was 793—seven points shy of the statewide API performance target of 800 for all schools. Over the last three years, BAMS has increased its API score by 29 points.

## Common Planning Time

The close collegial relationship started with staff | ^ c | ^ æ c • Ê Á æ } á Á à ^ Á \* ! æ å ^ and frequent social activities; it deepened when the staff instituted professional learning communities. In fall 2004, the Capistrano Unified School District Á ^ ç c ^ } á ^ á Á c @ ^ Á • & @ [ | Á á æ ^ Á • hour block of time for collaborative planning on a weekly basis. This modified schedule was accomplished through a “late start” day and was given the acronym of ACE (Articulation and Collaboration for Excellence). Prior to implementing ACE time, BAMS staff members developed team norms to govern the use of valuable planning time, which allowed them to stay focused and positive.

## Collaborative Activities

During ACE time teachers collaborate by departments, common prep team • Ê Á æ } á Á à ^ Á \* ! æ å ^ teams. Each type of collaborative meeting has a different purpose. For example, the leadership team members agreed to study a breakdown of student suspensions by ethnicity so they could better ~ } á ^ | • c æ } á Á c | ^ } á • Ê Á V @ ^ Á • the curriculum to reach state standards Á Á æ | ã \* } teams share best practices and work with district resource teachers to improve instruction. Common prep teams analyze test data, define course outcomes, develop assessments and rubrics, examine

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student work, and map the curriculum to the instructional calendar. The grade-level teams focus on integrating curriculum, scheduling projects and tests, and monitoring individual student progress. Monthly meetings of school leaders from seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and San Clemente High School help BAMS ease the transition from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school.

### **Benefits to Students**

The team-based focus on student success has helped students achieve, as seen in the yearly increase in the API and the achievement of adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets for all subgroups. Students quickly receive the interventions and support they need through grade-level team collaboration. Communication with parents has also improved through grade-level team planning. Students join the staff in being proud of the resulting school awards: BAMS was honored as a Distinguished School in 2001 and recognized as one of California's Schools to Watch in 2005.

### **Challenges**

In spite of the benefits of collaboration, the staff faces the ongoing challenge of overcoming the limited amount of time that ACE provides. Staff members supplement this time through release days that provide an extended working period for collaborative planning. Focused groups of teachers also meet after school for specific purposes, such as planning and implementing the social studies-based technology project.

The teams have a long-range plan of using ACE time to analyze both research-based instructional practices and assessment data and to apply their findings to instructional decisions. They continue working to improve the quality of teaching. Their goal is to ensure that each student benefits from excellent teaching in a safe and encouraging learning community.

By Cheryl Baughn, Principal, Bernice Ayer Middle School



**According to *Taking Center Stage* (p. 131), interdisciplinary team teaching has received widespread acceptance because of the following:**

- Greater flexibility in planning and implementing counseling programs and increased opportunities for tutoring and mentoring is provided because the teachers can work with the same students over longer periods of time.
- Teachers and students get to know one another better. As a result the students embrace the academic goals of the school.
- Students experience a greater sense of personal identity, an enhanced ability to connect concepts across subject-matter areas, and an increased opportunity to engage in cooperative learning activities.
- At-risk students are identified more easily. As a result earlier intervention with alternative instructional opportunities is allowed in response to individual needs.

# The Power of Many Working As One

**Olive Peirce Middle School**  
**San Diego County**  
**Ramona City Unified School District**  
**1521 Hanson Lane**  
**Ramona, California**  
**Linda Solis, Principal**

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Community: **Urban**

Enrollment: **1,145**

Student Demographics:

**1%** African American

**1%** American Indian/Alaskan Native

**1%** Asian

**25%** Hispanic/Latino

**1%** Pacific Islander

**71%** White

Grade Levels: **+ ! ,**

2004 **API:** + ( % ' fl i d ' % & ' d c ] b h g ' g ]

2004 **AYP:** **No\***

Free/Reduced Lunch: **29%**

English Learners: **14%**

\* School did not meet all 2004 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria.

Olive Peirce Middle School (OPMS) in Ramona, California, is a professional learning community serving more c @æ} Á F É F € € Á • ^ ç ^ } e @ÉÁÁ. Recognized as both a National Blue Ribbon School and a California Distinguished School, OPMS was awarded a San Diego Business in Education Best Practices award and exceeded its 2004 Academic Performance Index (API) target by growing 12 points last year, to a total score of 741. This performance was a comeback from a disappointing drop in API scores in 2001.

## Common Planning Time

The school changed from a master schedule to a “servant schedule”Á c @æc Á ] ! [ ç ã á ^ • Á æ Á ! schedule with extended blocks of time twice a week for team planning and collaboration. When the school was transformed to a professional learning community, staff members eliminated faculty meetings and instead devoted every Wednesday to professional collaboration: interdisciplinary, | ^ æ á ^ ! • @ã ] Ê Á @[ ! ã : [Á}æ æ |ÉÁ Ç • æ ~ à ~ È Á & c Ö States to og È ~ Á n members • Á • release time to score and analyze quarterly benchmark assessments; develop SMART (strategic and specific, measurable, attainabl Ê Á | ^ • ~ | c • È à æ • ^ á Ê Á ã are based on the á D Á \* [ æ | • publication by Anne Conzemius and Jan O'Neill (*The Handbook for SMART School Teams* [[http://qldlearning.com/b/pubs\\_SmartHandbook.shtml](http://qldlearning.com/b/pubs_SmartHandbook.shtml)]); and engage in peer coaching and observation of a TIPS Team (Teacher Induction Program for Success). The TIPS program was developed by the Gaston County school system, North Carolina (<http://gaston.k12nc.us/system/staffdev/tips/tipspro.htm>).

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## **Collaborative Activities**

To help forge the commitment for change from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, the staff reads professional literature, including the research of Rick DuFour, Robert Eaker, Mike Schmoker, and Michael Fullen.

Teachers work together in core content teams known as horizontal teams, and they share a common preparation period. Teachers also collaborate in vertical teams, which are grade level and cross-curricular, and work with the same 150–160 students. The vertical teams discuss grading practices, online grades, student work, and individual learning plans for struggling students. They also write team postcards to parents. Teachers in both teams work together to plan standards-based lessons, share best practices, design benchmark assessments, analyze assessment results and student work, adjust instructional strategies based on Marzano's research, and engage in peer observation and coaching.

OPMS also developed its own academic enhancement class (ACE), and every teacher is responsible for facilitating a class. ACE is a 40-minute class that includes students from each of a teacher's five periods. The goal of ACE is to increase connectedness and build trust between a teacher and a group of 30 students. The Monday ACE class is focused on getting organized, setting goals, using the agenda, and planning homework. ACE classes on Tuesday through Friday are focused on reading comprehension in the content areas, homework, and tutoring. ACE time is used each quarter for the Choices assemblies that focus on schoolwide core values and intervention strategies. By using ACE class time for assemblies, the school avoids the reduction of instructional time. ACE has been very positive for special education students and their teachers, and it has strengthened the relationships between all students and staff.

## **Benefits to Students**

The shift to a focus on learning has had enormous impact on the culture of OPMS and on student achievement. Students benefit both academically and emotionally by belonging to a team of teachers who know them well, care about them, have access to all their grades and assignments, and work together for their success. Students enthusiastically tell visitors about their professional learning community, recite core values, and explain their achievement targets. Discipline problems have dramatically decreased, creating a sense of safety for the students.

## **Challenges**

OPMS faced significant challenges as it moved from being a traditional middle school to a professional learning community. Some of the barriers team members had to face involved their teachers union, scheduling practices, grading practices, attitudes toward discipline, and lesson planning. To achieve meaningful collaboration, team members struggled through each of those issues to develop a new model for their schedule. Many old models of scheduling were eliminated to ensure academic core teachers had the same common period and professional learning community needs were served. Team members also worked with the union in developing the block schedule and setting up the new ACE class.

Ultimately, staff had to stop making excuses for not collaborating and not developing a professional learning community model. Collaboration was hard work, but it strengthened the commitment to students and to the principles of the professional learning community. The staff would never go back to the culture of collegial isolation they had before. Staff and students now see OPMS as a great place for young people and adults to learn, and they passionately believe in the power of many working as one.

By Linda Solis, Principal, Olive Peirce Middle School

# Woodrow Wilson Middle School

Riverside County  
**Woodrow Wilson Middle School**  
 Desert Sands Unified School District

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 Indio, California  
 Harry Muñoz, Principal  
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Community: **Urban**

Enrollment: **557**

Student Demographics:

**1%** African American

**96%** Hispanic/Latino

**3%** White

Grade Levels: \* ! ,

2004 **API: 571** fl i d ' + \$ ' d c ] b h g g ] b W

2004 **AYP: No\***

Free/Reduced Lunch: **77%**

English Learners: **52%**

\* School did not meet all 2004 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria.

Woodrow Wilson Middle School (WWMS) is proud of its success. WWMS has shown significant improvement in its academic performance while having a student population in which over half are English learners and more than three-quarters are Hispanic/Latino. In the last three years, WWMS has increased its API scores by 70 points. California has recognized WWMS's achievement by granting it two prestigious awards: the Governor's Performance Award in 2002 and the Title 1 Academic Achievement Award in May 2005.

## Common Planning Time

WWMS's sustained growth is a result of collaborative learning in all subject areas. In the last three years, WWMS has shortened one day a week, increased instructional time four days a week, and released students early on Wednesdays. This modified schedule allowed teachers to meet for 1 hour and 20 minutes each week. Teachers each serve on two teams: department and interdisciplinary. Department teams consist of teachers within the same subject area (electives, English, arts/social studies, math, science, and special education). Interdisciplinary teams consist of teachers within the same grade level (sixth, seventh, or eighth).

All team meetings focus on student achievement. Each team has a leader who is responsible for an agenda item. These team norms and minutes. These team norms state that each teacher is responsible for being on time and present for the entire meeting. Team leaders meet monthly with the principal to discuss agenda items and to set the team meeting schedule for the following month.

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## **Collaborative Activities**

To give students a sense of community, interdisciplinary teams advise and teach all the students in one grade level. Each team consists of a language arts teacher, a math teacher, a science teacher, and a social studies teacher. The teachers meet regularly to plan curriculum and discuss the needs and progress of their students. This team structure provides for interdisciplinary planning and consistent communication about students. Teachers have developed units of study that are based on central themes and are supported by team and individual class activities. Through collaborative activities teachers reinforce concepts, topics, or skills in lessons across several subjects.

## **Benefits to Students**

Because team teachers have the same planning period, they are able to work on curriculum integration, interdisciplinary units, field trips, and special activities for their students. Teaming has allowed teachers to identify and recommend practices for students and has helped build family partnerships. Parent conferences and special education meetings are more effective because all of the students' teachers are available at the same time of the day. The teams also provide the children with an easier transition from elementary school because teachers have specialized skills in their particular subject areas and can provide quicker responses to students' needs in the classroom. In addition, many of the students come to WWMS at an average of three years below grade level. Closing that achievement gap is a big challenge. However, the team efforts—focused on helping all students succeed—make the job possible. Teachers are able to work together to try to meet each student's needs, resulting in higher overall achievement.

## **Challenges**

A continual challenge the staff tries to meet is to remain focused on student academic achievement. The weekly meetings are a constant reminder to ensure that group norms are respected and all agenda items are centered on improving student achievement.

It is also a challenge to keep the collaboration positive. For example, the interdisciplinary teams have not been as productive as the department teams because some team members resent working with those outside their area of expertise and feel collaboration is not needed. One way team members are dealing with the interdisciplinary resistance is to get more ideas from their colleagues for agenda items and to establish group norms.

Getting everyone to think as a team is a challenge. However, considering the high number of English-language learners, the high family poverty rate, and the relatively low level of achievement the students bring to WWMS, the collaborative sharing of ideas by staff members is the best way to make a positive difference in students' lives.

By Harry Muñoz, Principal, Woodrow Wilson Middle School



## California High School Exit Examination Update

In December 2004 copies of the *California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)* study guides were sent to every school district in the state for distribution to grade ten students. Each student was to be given a personal copy of the guides, which did not have to be returned to the district. The guides are suitable for incorporation into classroom instruction. Middle grade mathematics and English-language arts teachers are encouraged to examine and utilize materials from the study guide in middle grade classes. The guides are available on the California Department of Education's (CDE) Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/resources.asp>.

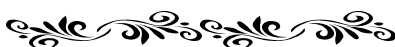
In February 2005 CDE released the assistance packet titled *Reporting Individual Student Results for the 2004-05 School Year*. This document can assist schools and school districts in reporting student results to parents and guardians. The packet contains samples of student reports and a sample cover letter addressed to parents and guardians. The packet is located at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/documents/reportingpkt.pdf>.

### Senate Bill 964 Study

*Education Code* Section 60852.5 (Senate Bill 964) required a study to examine alternatives to the *CAHSEE* for students with disabilities. WestEd, the contractor for this study, worked with a 15-member advisory panel appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The advisory panel was composed of representatives from various areas of the special education community. The final report is available on the California Department of Education's (CDE) Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/documents/sb964final.pdf>.

Additional information about *CAHSEE* is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/>. Questions about *CAHSEE* can be directed to CDE's *CAHSEE* Office at (916) 445-9449.

By Jessica Valdez, Consultant, High School Exit Exam Office, California Department of Education



## Teachers Collaborate on National Board Certification Process

Teacher collaboration is often the key to success during the process to earn advanced certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The National Board Certification process requires the development of a portfolio that reflects the teacher's practice and the demonstration of subject-matter competence through the completion of written exercises scheduled at assessment centers. Candidates who belong to a learning community of teachers that are also seeking national certification have a higher success rate.

National certification is a significant step in the career of an experienced teacher. Teachers who complete the process consistently rate it as the best professional development experience of their careers. The NBPTS offers national certification in multiple certificate areas based on the age range of the students and the subject matter being taught. A list of the 3,079 National Board Certified

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Teachers in California is available at <http://www.nbpts.org/nbct/directory.cfm>. Research continues to show that National Board Certification improves teacher effectiveness and therefore student achievement. To read about three recent studies, visit online at <http://www.nbpts.org/research/index.cfm>.

In California National Board Certified Teachers may apply for a \$20,000 incentive award to teach in high priority schools as well as use their national certification as evidence of their highly qualified status for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requirements. Funding authorized by NCLB, Title II, Part A, is a source that districts may use to provide support for teachers seeking national certification.

Details about the incentive award, candidate fee subsidies, district support, university-based support, and various California support groups are available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/te/nbpts.asp>.

By Kay Garcia, Consultant, Mathematics and Science Leadership Unit, California Department of Education



## **Your Partner in the Library**

Teachers, are you looking for a collaborative teaching partner? Someone who cares as much about your students and their needs as you do? Someone who is willing and able to teach with you? Someone who knows how to find the extra resources you need? This special someone could be your school library media teacher.

Collaboration with the library media teacher makes sense at several levels. It leads to the availability of library resources that are selected specifically for classroom assignments. It also helps the teacher design assignments that use existing available library resources. For example, the soon-to-be released state-adopted textbooks (kindergarten through grade eight) for history-social science will connect history-social science instruction with effective use of library media centers and information literacy skills. This creates a perfect classroom and library collaborative opportunity. Since a California library media teacher is both a credentialed teacher and a library professional, another teacher is added to the collaborative mix. Such a partnership can reduce class size at selected times and create additional learning opportunities for students.

*How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study* (2000) shows the impact of collaboration on student achievement. Test scores rose in both elementary and middle schools as library media teachers and classroom teachers worked together. This middle school study showed that test scores increased as library media teachers spent more time:

- Planning cooperatively with teachers
- Identifying materials for teachers
- Teaching information literacy skills to students
- Providing in-service training to teachers
- Managing a computer network through which the library media program reaches students in classrooms, labs, and other instructional sites

In 1994, 15 teams of middle school library media teachers, classroom teachers, and administrators from around the country met for five days for collaborative training. They planned student-centered

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learning activities that allowed teachers and library media teachers to work together. In a follow-up study, Grover (1996) found that in addition to learning the how to's of collaboration, the teams reported the following benefits:

- Students were more involved in learning, and their work was more creative.
- Collaboration ignited creativity among teachers, and the creative fire spread to learners.
- Modeling collaboration resulted in more collaboration among faculty in the school.
- Modeling collaboration influenced students, teachers, and parents who learn to share ideas.
- Teachers, principals, and librarians communicated more frequently.
- When students worked in teams, the role of the teacher changed to that of resource person and learning facilitator.
- Students learned to interact with people outside of the school.
- The library media program was integral to the collaborative teaching model.
- Administrators benefited professionally from their participation in teaching teams.

The American Association of School Librarians firmly believes that student achievement is the bottom line (*Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, 1998). It is vital that classroom and library media teachers work collaboratively to increase learning opportunities for students.

More information on dynamic school library programs is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb>.

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## **Working Toward a Common Goal**

It is not unusual to see students from the Catherine L. Zane Middle School and Winship Middle School working alongside students from Eureka High School. The middle school students receive technology assistance from the high school students in the Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST) Program. The Eureka City Schools (ECS) established this flourishing collaborative effort three years ago when an EAST program was started at the high school.

The EAST lab is a student-driven, high-tech learning environment that connects the classroom with the community through a variety of service-learning projects. The program supports student academic

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content acquisition while encouraging communication, collaboration, and cooperation among students through technology-infused, student-driven service-learning projects. EAST was recently selected by the U.S. Department of Education to be included in the National Technology Plan as an example of a successful, innovative initiative.

As a result of an Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) grant, EAST was expanded to the two middle schools in the district. The district now has one EAST program that serves three schools and students in grades six through twelve. The district has designed a cascading collaborative leadership model in which EAST teachers and students from Eureka High provide support and additional training to the middle schools. Doing so has allowed EAST teachers time to collaborate with each other. They found that collaborative, across-grade-level professional development promotes the rich exchange of ideas and encompasses collegial support and training.

In the EAST classroom students mentor one another and develop accountability and a true appreciation for diversity. The EAST program promotes the creation of a learning environment in which students with all degrees of skills, experience, and aptitudes work together. Middle school and high school students have the opportunity to collaborate on projects.

A past project undertaken by the high school students included working with the local fire department to analyze and plot response times to fires. This information was used to help the fire department decide where to build a new firehouse in the community. Students addressed mathematical standards as they set up the formulas to plot global positioning systems coordinates on local maps, and they met English–language arts standards as they wrote and presented their findings.

The collaboration model at ECS has not only changed the way professional development is delivered within the district but has also allowed the benefits of the EAST program to extend beyond the walls of the individual classrooms. Students from the three schools enthusiastically incorporate their academic content knowledge, technology, and twenty-first century skills to solve real-world problems. Teachers form collegial partnerships across grade levels to implement this unique learning environment and to enrich their own expertise as they work toward the common goal of student achievement.

For more information about the EAST program at ECS, contact Michelle Hutchins, Eureka City Schools, at (707) 476-1790.

By Joyce Hinkson, Consultant, Education Technology Office, California Department of Education

## Counselors' Corner

### Research on School Counseling Effectiveness

The California Association of School Counselors has compiled a list of 50 research articles showing the effectiveness of school counseling. The articles are grouped under 32 topics that range from the positive effect school counseling has on decreasing classroom disturbances to the significant impact it has on shaping student's future career plans. This list is available at [http://www.schoolcounselor-ca.org/documents/research/CounselingResearch\\_3.pdf](http://www.schoolcounselor-ca.org/documents/research/CounselingResearch_3.pdf) (Outside Source).

## California Association of School Counselors

The California Association of School Counselors (CASC) is an organization dedicated to serving all California school counselors. It offers the latest training to ensure that school counselors are prepared with the knowledge they need to work with all students. The CASC Web site contains links related to professional development, conferences, curriculum and best practices, legislative updates, resources, and publications. Visit the CASC Web site at <http://www.schoolcounselor-ca.org>.



**Language Change in High School Graduation Requirement — Mathematics.** The passage of Assembly Bill 2525 in September 2004 changed the language of California *Education Code* Section 51224.5(c). The change in the law makes it clear that students who complete the algebra requirement prior to high school must still pass at least two courses in mathematics during high school. Although the specifics about the two courses are determined at the local level, the purpose of the requirement is to enhance students' ongoing development of mathematics proficiency while in high school. To read the exact language of the law, please visit <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/> and search for *Education Code* Section 51224.

**California Career Technical Education (CTE) Standards and Framework Initiative.** In May 2005 the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the CTE standards for grades seven through twelve. The CTE standards were developed in consultation with an advisory group appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

*Education Code* Section 51226.1 requires that the CTE framework be adopted by the SBE by June 1, 2006. The CTE standards and framework will bolster California's standards-based education system by incorporating cutting-edge knowledge about career options, technology, and skills required for success in adult life. Additional information regarding the CTE standards and framework can be found on the Sonoma State University's Web site, California Institute on Human Services, CTE Standards and Framework, at <http://www.sonoma.edu/cihs/cte/>.

**Williams Case.** Latest information on the landmark Superior Court case to provide all California students equal access, instructional materials, safe schools, and quality teachers can be found at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/ce/wc/>.

**SchoolsMovingUP.** WestEd's Web site, SchoolsMovingUp, provides high-quality resources, proven services, and powerful tools focused on school improvement. Resources include profiles of schools from across the country that have improved student achievement; easily implemented or replicated school and school district tips to assist in school improvement efforts; frequent online events featuring educational experts; and articles, books, and abstracts offering practical ideas and models for school improvement. SchoolsMovingUp also offers practical information about the sweeping reform of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001:  
<http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/wested/print/htdocs/home.htm>.

**The TECH Equity Project.** The TECH Equity Project is a federally funded educational program that promotes the development of project-based, gender equitable lesson plans through curriculum-planning trainings for middle and high school math, science, and technology teachers. The curriculum is aligned with state standards. After completing the free on-line introductory unit, teachers may choose from six self-paced online courses or they may attend a two-day workshop. Continuing education credits and stipends are available to those who complete the course. (Note: Stipends are offered only to participants who attend the workshop.) For more information go online to <http://www.techequity.org/> or contact Sacha Pampalone, (805) 482-4523, [sacha.pampalone@csuci.edu](mailto:sacha.pampalone@csuci.edu).

**CDE Conference Calendar.** Identifies statewide and national education conferences and workshops of interest to educators, parents, and students: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/ca/cc/>.

**Funding: California Department of Education (CDE) Administered.** Search CDE funding by fiscal year, type, status, topic, keyword(s), or any combination. Use Advanced Search for more choices: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/sf/>.

**Funding: Outside the CDE.** State, federal, and other funding opportunities administered by agencies outside the CDE: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/of/ap/>.

**Virtual Library.** Collection of resources that may be helpful for districts that have high-priority schools: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/>.

## Join MidNet—the Middle Grades E-mail List!

Join the CDE Middle Grades e-mail list at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/mg/> to receive notices about middle grades-related information and upcoming *Middle Grades Spotlight* newsletter issues.

To view current and past *Middle Grades Spotlight* newsletter issues, visit:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/nl/mdlgrdsnswltrs.asp>

Please send your comments, contributions, or suggestions to [MidNet@cde.ca.gov](mailto:MidNet@cde.ca.gov). Your ideas and suggestions are welcome.

### ***Middle Grades Spotlight Newsletter***

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